

VZCZCXRO0544  
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHYE #1244 2891154  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 161154Z OCT 07  
FM AMEMBASSY YEREVAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6468  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ3-E/CCJ5-E// PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ4/ECJ5-A/ECJ1/ECJ37// PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L YEREVAN 001244

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/16/2017  
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [IZ](#) [AM](#)  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KOCHARIAN PROMISES ANSWER ON IRAQ TROOP  
ENHANCEMENT

Classified By: CDA R.V. Perina, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Initially opposed, Kocharian eventually agreed to consider DOD's request to "enhance" Armenia's contribution to Iraq. His goal, if he agreed, was to keep the change as low-profile as possible. He will get back to us in eight to ten days. He wants to check whether a new legislative approval would be required, and also consult with ethnic Armenian Diaspora representatives in other Arab states about possible blowback from extremists. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) CDA met with President Kocharian October 16 to follow up on DASD Cagan's visit and request Armenia to double its Iraq troop contribution to approximately 100. CDA noted that Cagan had met October 11 (while Kocharian was abroad) with the defense minister, chief of the general staff, prime minister, and key parliament committee chairs, to discuss this request, and had received a generally positive response. (See septel for details)

¶3. (C) Kocharian initially reacted negatively to the request, making two basic objections. First, that it was politically difficult domestically, and the government had had a hard time securing the original parliamentary authorization to deploy to Iraq. He was uncertain how hard it would be to secure authorization for an increase. Second, he had great concern about what an increased deployment might do to put Armenian communities in Iraq and other Middle Eastern states at greater risk. He was especially worried about any increase being used for "propaganda" purposes. Armenia has thus far remained under the radar screen as a troop contributor, and he would not want to draw the hostile attention of Arab extremists to Armenia, potentially putting the Armenian Diaspora population across the Middle East at greater risk. Kocharian said he was not prepared to agree to such a request without first consulting Armenian Diaspora community leaders in several key Arab states.

¶4. (C) CDA pointed out that Cagan had had good meetings with parliamentary leaders, who thought that legislative approval would not be a serious problem. Kocharian asked whom Cagan had seen. When we told him she had met with Artur Agabekian and Armen Rustamian (NOTE: both members of the Dashnaktsutyun party, and chairs, respectively of the defense and foreign relations committee END NOTE), Kocharian seemed surprised. He remarked that it was the Dashnaks who had come out so fiercely against the Iraq deployment when it had come up in parliament. His opposition seemed to soften slightly upon learning that the two key Dashnak committee chairmen were apparently on board.

¶5. (C) Kocharian said that he would need eight or ten days to consult with Diaspora representatives about security issues, as well as to check whether he could legally increase the Iraq contingent without needing explicit new authorization

from the National Assembly or having to announce a troop increase. If he agreed to the enhanced contingent, he would hope to do so as quietly as possible, so as to call no attention to the change. This would mean implementing the enhancement without a parliamentary vote. CDA assured him that the U.S. could do everything possible to keep the increased deployment low-profile. In any case, the CDA said, the additional Armenian troops would almost certainly not be ready to deploy in Iraq until after the February 17, 2008, presidential election, although we would want to start the training as soon as possible. This point seemed reassuring to the president.

¶6. (C) Kocharian closed the discussion by saying that "this is my decision," and asking that the USG not put pressure on PM Sargsian during his Washington visit. The CDA took the point, but said the PM could nonetheless expect his senior USG interlocutors to raise the issue with him.  
PERINA